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OPINION

CIA ducks again

A letter on this page from Andrew T. Falkiewicz, assistant to the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, complains about "factual inaccuracies" in an Aug. 23 Register editorial about the CIA. The editorial criticized the CIA for ducking questions raised by the National Conference of Editorial Writers and for not putting in writing a policy the agency had stated privately.

The chairman of the editorial writers' organization wrote to CIA Director George Bush on three occasions. Each time, concern was expressed about the planting by the CIA of false and misleading stories in foreign publications and the hiring by the CIA of foreign journalists.

The CIA answered each letter, but each response evaded both questions. As the chairman of the editorial writers' group said at one point, "The response, I am sorry to say, was no response at all."

Bush refused to meet with representatives of the National Conference of Editorial Writers after first agreeing to a meeting; CIA officials did meet with representatives of the National News Council.

At that meeting, CIA officials said the agency would not have ties to anyone working in a "journalist-

ic capacity" for U.S. news agencies. Previously, in a Feb. 11 statement, Bush had said that the CIA would not have relationships with anyone "accredited" to U.S. news media.

The "accredited" qualifier left the agency free to put on its payroll free-lancers and others who worked for U.S. publications but were not "accredited." The CIA's statement to the National News Council that it would not have ties to anyone working in a "journalistic capacity" was an important elaboration, but, as we said Aug. 23, the CIA did not put this in writing. Falkiewicz's letter quoting the old "accredited" language makes us wonder whether the CIA considers itself bound by what it told the News Council.

Our Aug. 23 editorial also said: "The agency has refused to drop foreign journalists from its payroll and has refused to stop using covert propaganda abroad. There is no way to prevent phony stories planted abroad from being picked up by the U.S. news media."

Readers will note that Falkiewicz's letter does not address these issues, as the CIA refused to address them when they were raised earlier by the National Conference of Editorial Writers.

CIA official
disputes editorial

To the Editor:

The Aug. 23 Register editorial, "Run-around by the CIA" has just been brought to my attention.

There are important factual inaccuracies in [the editorial]. . . .

1. The extensive exchange of correspondence between senior officials of the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Conference of Editorial Writers is anything but strategy of "ignore the critics." We have no objection to the recipient making our letters available to you for publication, so that your readers can properly judge the extent to which we have sought to respond to "the concerns expressed by the editorial writers."

2. The most cursory — but accurate — reference to the published text of the director's statement of Feb. 11 would have prevented your erroneous assertion that the CIA "has not put in writing" guidelines for the agency's relations with "anyone working in a journalistic capacity for U.S. news agencies." The relevant quotation from the Feb. 11 statement is:

"Effective immediately, CIA will not enter into any paid or contractual relationship with any full-time or part-time news correspondent accredited by any U.S. news service, newspaper, periodical, radio or television network or station."

This represents a voluntary, self-imposed limitation on legitimate activities of this agency of the federal

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